

EXHIBIT E

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Russia's RT attacks Facebook for suspending 4 viral news channels that broadcast Kremlin talking points to millennials

Alexandra Ma Feb 18, 2019, 11:42 AM

6-8 minutes

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- **Facebook on Friday suspended four viral news channels that broadcast videos that were critical of US policy or exploited tensions, CNN reported.**
 - **Those channels are operated by Maffick Media, which is majority-funded by Ruptly, a subsidiary of Russia's state-funded RT broadcaster.**
 - **Facebook doesn't require pages to disclose who funds them — but the tech giant said it suspended those channels anyway so viewers wouldn't "be misled about who's behind them."**
 - **RT's editor-in-chief attacked Facebook's decision on Monday. Maffick's CEO also described the suspension as "unprecedented discrimination."**

The editor of the Russian state-owned broadcaster RT has attacked Facebook for suspending four viral video channels that broadcast Kremlin talking points to millennials.

Facebook on Friday suspended Soapbox, which makes videos about current affairs; Waste-Ed, an environmental channel; Backthen, a history channel; and In the Now, a millennial-focused news channel, [CNN reported](#).

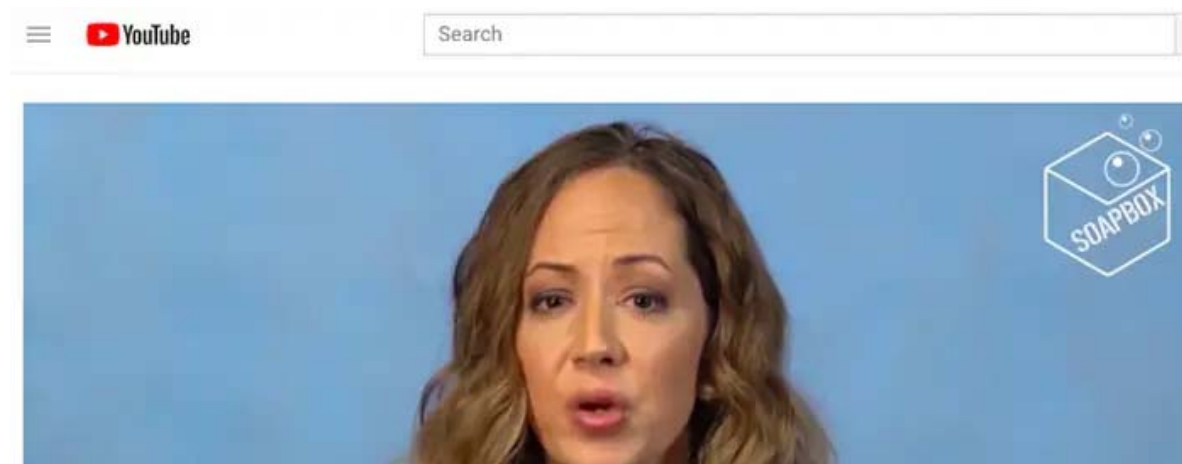
Those channels publish videos critical of [US](#) and [NATO](#) foreign policy, American [waste habits](#), and news issues like [Russia being barred from the 2018 Winter Olympics](#). While the videos do not overtly criticize the US and applaud Russia, they often play on tensions in the US.

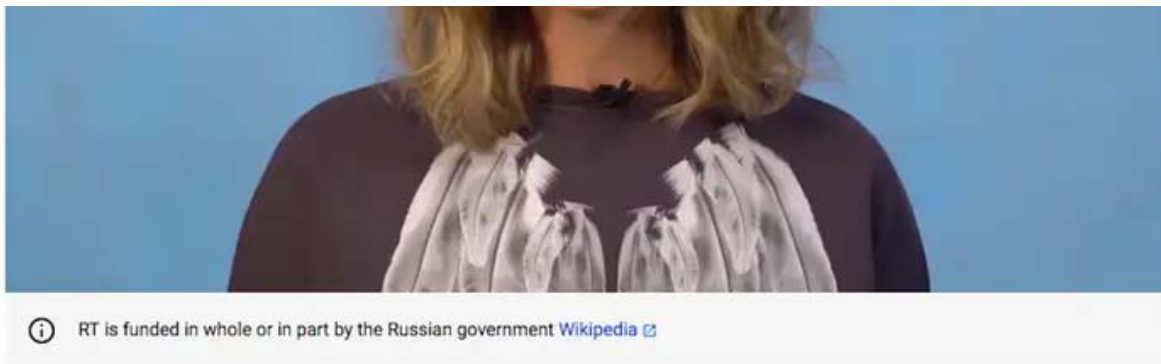
Read more: [*These 30 Facebook ads were shared by Russian trolls just days before the 2016 election. Some were so subtle you probably didn't realize they were ads.*](#)

The channels' videos garnered tens of millions of views on Facebook before the suspension, both CNN and [RT](#) reported.

In response, RT's editor-in-chief, Margarita Simonyan, [tweeted Monday morning](#): "Facebook has blocked our projects with billions of views!!!" She also [said Facebook blocked the pages without giving RT a chance to respond](#).

All the pages are run by Maffick Media, a German-registered company that operates up to a dozen contractors and freelancers out of a WeWork office in Hollywood, CNN reported.





U.S. WANTS WAR WITH IRAN

Maffick Media CEO Anissa Naouai presenting a video on "In The Now" about US tensions with Iran. This video was published January 31, with the image captured Monday.

[In the NOW/YouTube](#)

Maffick's murky finances

According to company records in Germany cited by CNN, Maffick is 51% owned by Ruptly, an RT subsidiary registered in Berlin. The remaining stake is controlled by Maffick CEO Anissa Naouai, a former RT host, CNN said.

In citing those company records, CNN credited the German news site T-Online and the Alliance for Securing Democracy, an anti-Kremlin advocacy group run by former US intelligence and State Department and intelligence officials.

Maffick's Facebook pages do not mention their parent company or stakeholders. Facebook typically doesn't require pages to declare such information.

Facebook said it would ask the page owners to disclose where the channels were run from and their affiliation with Ruptly, CNN reported.

"People connecting with Pages shouldn't be misled about who's

behind them," a Facebook spokesman told Business Insider in a statement. "Just as we've stepped up our enforcement of coordinated inauthentic behavior and financially motivated spam over the past year, we'll continue improving so people can get more information about the Pages they follow."

Naouai [said on Monday](#) that Facebook had not contacted Maffick about the suspensions.

Facebook has become stricter at policing content on its pages over the past year. The company has over the past six months taken down hundreds of pages and accounts deemed to be part of campaigns to influence politics around the world, from [the US](#) to [Moldova](#).

Read more: [Facebook is thinking about removing anti-vaccination content as backlash intensifies over the spread of misinformation on the social network](#)



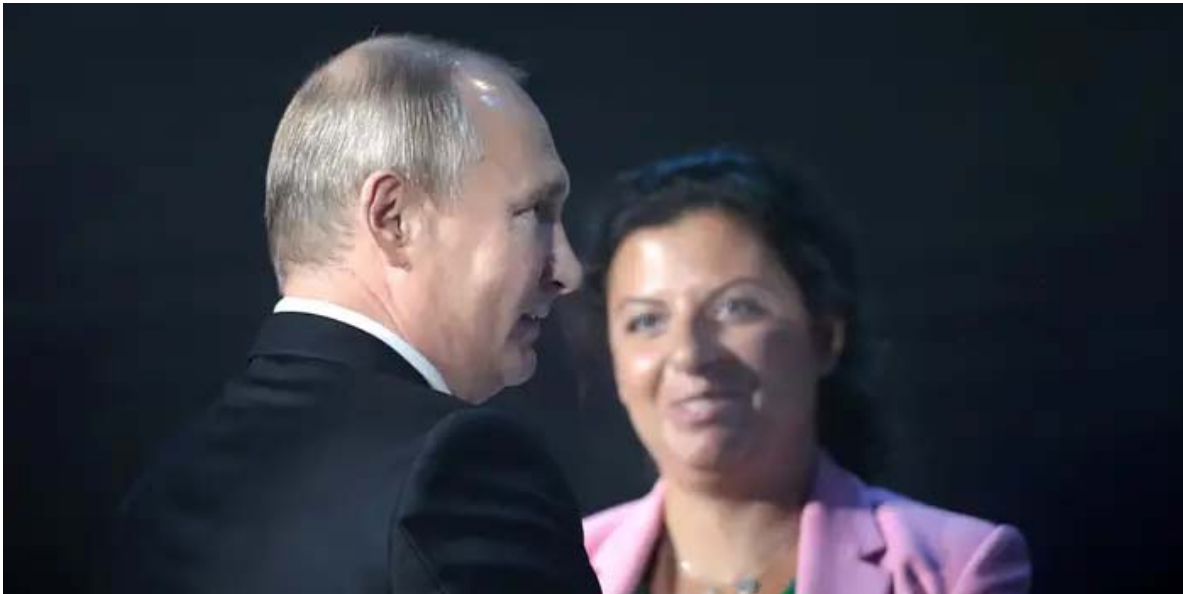
Zuckerberg in Washington, DC, in April. His company has been ramping up its crackdown on content lately.

REUTERS/Leah Millis

"In the Now" still operates an active channel on YouTube and regularly posts videos from Soapbox. Those videos, however, carry a disclaimer highlighting the channel's link to RT and the Russian government.

RT's US affiliate [registered as a foreign agent](#) in the US under the Foreign Agents Registration Act in late 2017. Simonyan, the RT editor-in-chief, called the requirement "war the US establishment wages with our journalists."

Read more: [*RT editor-in-chief: US affiliate of Russia Today will register as a foreign agent*](#)



Putin with Simonyan in Moscow in July.

Sergei Chirikov/Pool via Reuters

'Unprecedented discrimination'

Simonyan reacted to Facebook's suspensions with outrage in a series of Monday-morning tweets.

"CNN, on a tip from a fund funded by the State Department and NATO, made material that this project is funded from Russia,"

Simonyan wrote.

It is not clear where she based this allegation on — it is likely that she was referring to the Alliance for Securing Democracy. Business Insider has contacted CNN for comment.

Simonyan also suggested that Facebook had suspended Maffick's pages only after CNN asked it about Maffick's links to the Russian government. "We did not violate Facebook rules — we have never had any complaints," she said.

Naouai, Maffick's CEO, described Facebook's suspension as "unprecedented discrimination," noting in a post that the company didn't ask other channels to declare their parent company and financial affiliations.

[In a Monday statement](#), Maffick accused Facebook of discriminating against Russian government-funded content and CNN of "stoking hysteria over Russia."

It said: "Similarly to NPR, PBS, BBC, DW, CBC, AJ+ and many other media companies, Maffick is supported in part by government funding ... Why single us out?"

"One reason and one reason only: The government that helps fund our company is Russia," it added. "We did not violate any of Facebook's policies whatsoever. None of our content promotes disinformation or fake news."

"Yet CNN pressured Facebook into unprecedented censorship in a desperate attempt to milk ratings by stoking hysteria over Russia," Maffick said.

Rania Khalek, an American commentator who presents some Soapbox videos, also told CNN that working for Maffick "is not an

endorsement of the policies of its sponsors, just like working for CNN is not an endorsement of the pharmaceutical companies or weapons companies that play advertisements on CNN."